1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

cõlõlõ, they will say, They have bewitched him with *oloseta*.[1] In going to the diviner they take a cock for the cure. They kill their cock, the diviner eats it, they (go) to the threshing-floor for the cure. That threshing-floor is holy and no one may pass over it unless in passing he spits out a little saliva and says, There may it stay, there. Only so may they pass on, even though they may be many, each person does just that.' The 'many' who go to the diviner are representatives of the family, for their presence is necessary not only for proper diagnosis but also to show their concern and good faith.

Babyhood Proper

(*From the second week until about the seventh month*)

The period of lying-in is terminated when the cord falls and the navel heals, but the second period only begins when the baby turns dark. This period begins with 'Breaking the pot' (*Oku ipaya ombia*). The reference is to the gourd or pot in which the beer and medicine have been kept. 'Breaking the pot', says one informant, 'means dividing the dark from the light.'

'When a child is first born he is perfectly pink and it is not possible to say whether he will be light or dark. When six or eight days have passed he begins to change and to get the skin with which he will grow. At that time they recognize whether the child will be light or dark. Then is the time when those who do not like to hold a pink baby will begin to take him up, for also it is then that his neck begins to be strong. Then too the baby begins to cause people to laugh. Should he be a boy, those who take him will say, Ah my husband are you well? Ha, how is the man? Then the parent will rejoice and say, Shucks, this man doesn't give any cloth at all. Should she be a girl, they will also say, How is my girl? The parent replies, She is quite well. The man then says, Where is a beer-jug for a man? The parent says, Shucks, your girl can't brew at all, she's no good, they've just put her out of her house; they've just divorced her because she can't keep house properly.'

This period from about the eighth day until about the end of the sixth month is the period of babyhood proper. At night the baby sleeps with his mother and by day he is carried in a cloth on her back (*oku velekua*). When it is not raining his head may be seen

[1] *Oloseta* (plural) are a wild fruit, hard and about the size of hazel-nuts, used for playing *ocela*.

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854 protruding from the cloth and he seems to spend most of his time sleeping. Whenever he cries the mother will slide him around under her arm and give him the breast.[1] The only exception to absolute irregularity in suckling is that when the mother reaches the field for her morning work, she will offer the breast lest the baby may soon demand it and hinder her after she has begun her work. If she has no helper, she will do her field work with her baby on her back. Theoretically, the baby is almost never left alone.[2] There is a folk-tale telling how a woman put her baby down while cultivating and then accidentally beheaded him with her hoe.[3] If there is a young relative or if baby has an elder sibling, 'Then she (the mother) will give him to her to hold and to make him laugh under a tree where also has been placed his little jug of beer (non-alcoholic, *ocisangua*) and his little basket of gruel. There he will stay with his elder sibling while their mother does her work whether of cultivating or of breaking ground. Should he cry, the mother will sit down to nurse him and to feed him his gruel meanwhile looking to see whether there are lice in his head. She will say, Won't you nurse little father? Then shall we cultivate your little field?[4] A man doesn't cry, *he*? Then shan't we go to the village to stir up your gruel? Then the child will answer while nursing, *um*, *um*, *um*. When he finishes nursing she gives him back to his elder sibling and returns to her work. The elder sibling goes off with him in a hurry, lest being near his mother he may cry. She carries him on her back (*veleka*), and walking around the field she may talk to him saying, Ha! The ox is coming! *Haka*,[5] the hyena! Don't you see the bugaboo (*nono* or *nonono*) is coming to bite you if you cry again! Don't cry now. Shall we go to papa? Hasn't papa gone and caught a rat for you? When the mother lays off work, they go to the village. Passing through the woods on

[1] Hambly, op. cit., Plates L and LI for positions of nursing and carrying, respectively.

[2] Baby is sometimes left alone in the hut for a short time and then it may happen that he rolls into the fire. *Vide* also, reference to the folk-tale of 'Baby and his Elder Sister', *supra*, p. 84.

[3] One version of this tale may be found in the *Journal of the American Folk-lore Society*, 1922, vol. 35, p. 126.

[4] The reference is to the custom of cultivating a new field for each child at his birth. This field may become the child's own responsibility when he is able to assume it.

[5] *Haka*, an expletive which may express surprise, fear, disgust, pain, &c., according to context and tone.

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the way they gather firewood (*tiaña olõhuĩ*) and dig beer-root (*ombundi*) for the child's beer. When they come to the village they stir up his gruel and feed him.'

In the afternoon and evening the baby's father may hold him, but he is not likely to do so with any regularity until a little later. The European clothing worn by the men is harsh to the baby's tender skin as compared with the soft warmth of his mother's body. His elder sibling or cross-cousin holds and carries him, but whenever he cries his mother will take him up and nurse him. Indeed European or American mothers are considered very cruel to let their babies cry so endlessly. It goes almost without saying that feeding schedules would be considered as quite needless complications. It seems that feeding baby when he cries is more than a mere pacifier. He is credited with *knowing* when he wants to suckle, in spite of the fact that he will only take other food and drink if forced to.

'As to recognition of people, there are two sorts: first the child recognizes only the *smell* of his father and his mother since they sleep with him. But when six months have passed, then he begins to recognize his father and his mother "by heart".[1] He will very soon recognize his elder sibling (*huvaye*) or the cross-cousin (*epalume*), his young nurse (*naveleka*, lit. mother of carrying), and before long the others of the village will be known to him. But during this period only his mother is of real importance to him.' Only in case of her death would other women nurse him.[2] Even when there is a young nurse it is the mother who 'must care for him a great deal and since he has not as yet any sense, she must prevent him from doing everything which he wishes to do'.

At some time between six and twelve months, according to the child's development or the inclination of the parents, in order 'to accustom the child to sit, the parent digs a little hole in the ground just the size of his buttocks that he may not fall over. There they always place him and if he starts to fall over, they set him up again, until finally he sits up properly by himself and does not fall over. At that time he snatches at everything to play with it or to put it in his mouth.'

[1] *Utima*, the heart, is considered the seat of the intelligence.

[2] It is a curious fact that older women, although at the time without children themselves, may again produce liquid in the mammary glands if they take a baby to nurse. I do not believe that a test of such liquid has ever been made.

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PLATE XII

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Photo. D. G. Ridout

a. A baby clinic (Dondi)

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Photo. R. S. Webb

b. Bringing a patient in a hammock (*owanda*) (Bailundu)

[Facing p. 145]

1: Childs M-5 (1824-1949) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

PLATE XIV

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Photo. M. W. Ennis

b. Old age

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Photo. R. S. Webb

a. Woman (educated) carrying baby (*oku veleka*)

[Facing p. 155]

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OVIMBUNDU WOMEN AND INFANTS, BLENDE

W. Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

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OVIMBUNDU WOMEN AND CHILDREN, ELENDE

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